MANAGEMENT DIRECTION STATEMENT

March, 2003

for Upper Seymour River Provincial Park

Ministry of Water,
Land and Air Protection
Environmental
Stewardship Division

105-05486/

UPPER SEYMOUR RIVER PARK
MANAGEMENT DIRECTION STATEMENT
March 2003

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UPPER SEYMOUR RIVER PROVINCIAL PARK
MANAGEMENT DIRECTION STATEMENT

Introduction

Purpose of the Management Direction Statement

The purpose of this management direction statement (MDS) is to provide strategic management direction for Upper Seymour River Provincial Park. Management direction statements describe protected area values, management issues and concerns; management strategy focused on immediate priority objectives and strategies; and, directional statements from other planning processes. While strategies may be identified in the MDS, the completion of all these strategies is subject to funding and funding procedures. In addition, all development associated with these strategies within the protected area is subject to the BC Parks' Impact Assessment Policy.

Context

Upper Seymour River Provincial Park takes in the headwaters of the Seymour River, which forms the major drainage system into the Seymour Arm of Shuswap Lake. The 10,672 hectare park has provincially significant conservation values associated with representation of a wide mountain valley within the northern Columbia Mountains with steep mountain slopes enclosing old growth interior wet belt forests and extensive river and wetland environments.

The Upper Seymour Valley has a long elevational range of forest types from lower Interior Cedar-Hemlock forests, through Sub-alpine Engelmann Spruce forests to alpine habitats, with much of the forested stands in old growth condition. The extensive wetlands, slide-paths and forests are important habitats for grizzly and mountain caribou. The rugged terrain offers wilderness recreation opportunities and the river has potential for canoeing.

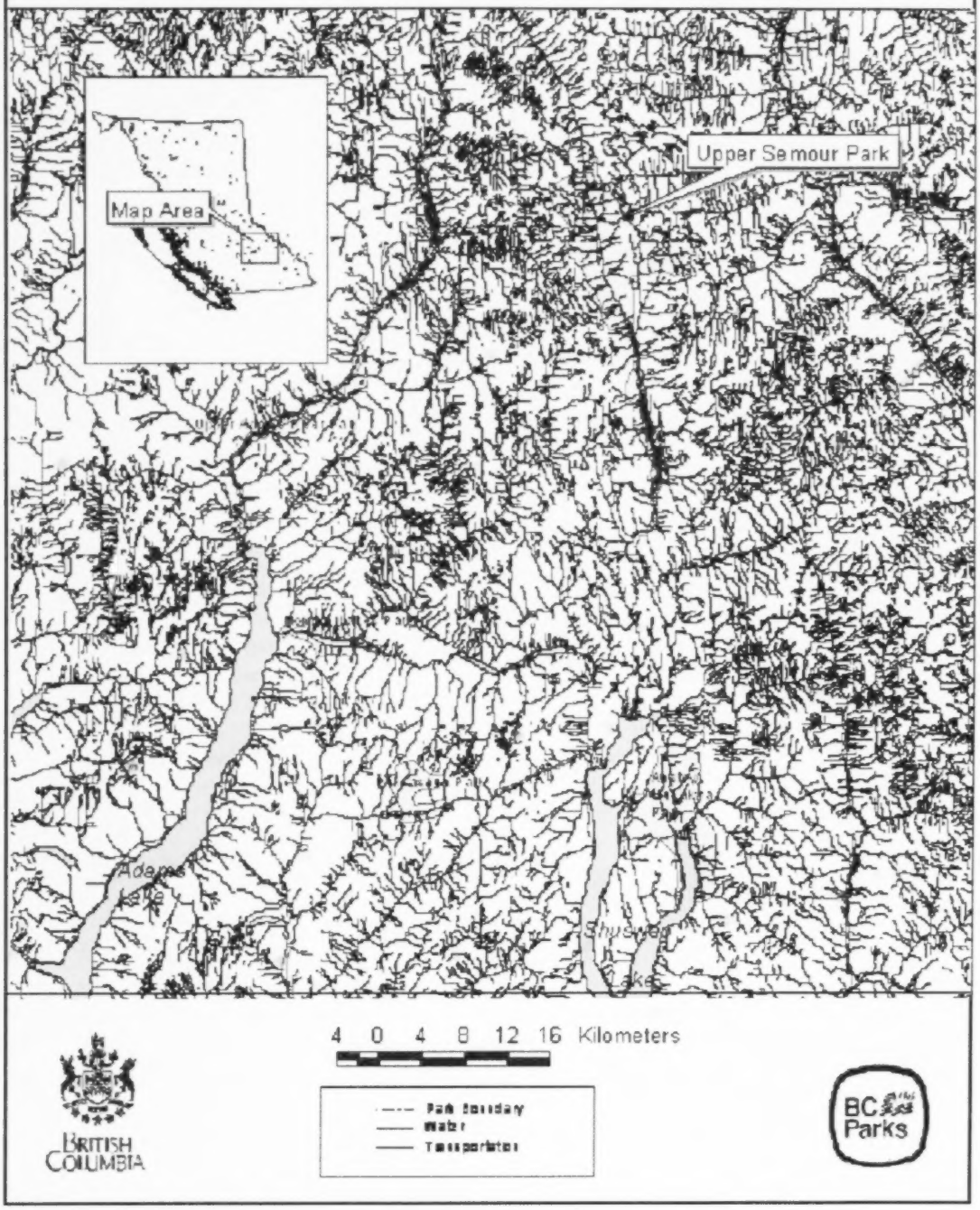
This protected area was recommended through the Okanagan-Shuswap Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) process and formally established as a Class A Park on April 18, 2001 by Order in Council under the *Park Act.*

Protected Area Attributes

Conservation

- Large mountain valley, extending from low river floodplain at 600 metres elevation to steep narrow headwaters that culminate at Seymour Pass at an elevation of 1200 metres. The valley sides are steep with numerous avalanche paths and streams leading from high mountain ridges and basins.
- Lower floodplain ecosystem is highly complex with river riparian and oxbows forming extensive wetlands of shallow ponds, marshes, wet meadows, fens and shrub carr habitats.
- The park is primarily within the Northern Kootenay Mountains (NKM) Ecosection. Representative elevation gradient includes subzone-variants - ICHvk1; ESSFwc2; ESSFvc; and AT-Ewcp; AT- Evcp. The very lower end of the park is in the Shuswap Highlands Ecosection, representing ICHmw3. These subzone-variants are well represented in other parks within these ecosections. Some of the park has been disturbed by logging and the cutblocks are in early successional stages.

Figure 1: Context **Upper Seymour Park**



- Very wet climate for the region creating optimal growing conditions for interior cedar/hemlock forests. Very extensive old growth in ICH and ESSF forests; ancient giant cedar trees (600 –1,000 years) are some of the oldest and largest in the southern Interior.
- Most northerly limits of mountain hemlock in the interior.
- The river has native stocks of rainbow trout.
- The park has extensive spring habitats for grizzly bear and seasonal habitats for mountain caribou.

Recreation and Tourism

- Steep slopes and thick forest understory pose difficult and challenging terrain conditions for hiking.
- Logging roads on either side of the river along most of the lower half of the park provide access for viewing the river, wildlife and ancient cedar trees, and the surrounding attractive visual setting of snow and glacier clad mountains, waterfalls, avalanche tracks and forests.
- The meandering and relatively slow flowing floodplain stretch of the river offers potential for river canoeing. Access to and off the river could be developed from the logging roads.
- The snowfields and glaciers in the park connect to large area to the north that was identified as a Tourism /Recreation Subzone in the Kamloops LRMP. The intent of this LRMP zone was to recognize the high capability and existing use for heli-skiing and cat-skiing.
- Tourism operators use the glacier and alpine terrain within the park for heli-hiking, mountaineering and skiing. There are no cat-skiing operations in the park but there is potential for this activity to extend into the park from the north.

Cultural Heritage

- There are no recorded archaeological sites in the park and First Nations historical use of the area is unknown.

Significance in the Protected Areas System

- The park has provincially significant conservation values, including river and wetland habitats and old growth forests. The Kamloops Regional Protected Areas Team (RPAT) rated the Upper Seymour as very high for conservation values. The Upper Seymour is considered one of the most biologically diverse mountain valleys in the southern Interior. The park also has high value for protection of core grizzly bear and seasonal mountain caribou habitat.
- Recreation values are rated regionally significant. Only a few wilderness enthusiasts are willing to endure the rigors of travelling through the tough terrain and thick vegetation of the park. There is potential to attract some use with trail development, but trail maintenance would be expensive and there are higher priorities for trail construction and maintenance within the park system. While the navigable portions of the river within the park offer an attractive setting and opportunity for canoeing, the relative remoteness will limit visitation.
- Tourism opportunities in the park are of regional significance with heli-based skiing, mountaineering and hiking as the primary activities. There is potential to expand these opportunities within the park.
- The protection of large old growth trees and grizzly bear habitat holds special vicarious and spiritual value.

Land Uses, Tenures and Interests

Access

The park is accessed by 40 kilometres of good two wheel drive gravel roads from the Community of Seymour Arm, which in turn is a 40 kilometre drive on gravel surface from the end of the paved road on the north shore of Shuswap Lake. Seymour Arm can also be accessed during the summer by a small car ferry.

Tenures

- License of Occupation –335761 – Cariboo Helicopter Skiing Ltd. – for heli-skiing, heli-touring, heli-fishing, heli-mountaineering and heli-hiking.
- Trapline – 5388 – encompassing the whole of the park.
- Guide and Outfitting License – GOKA0106 – Wayne Dzaman.

Existing Land Use Activities and Facilities

- The lower park section is narrow and bounded by forest harvesting roads and extensive cutblocks. The upper portion is in pristine wilderness, with no apparent sign of human use.
- The high glaciers and alpine tundra at the north end of the park are used for heli-based tourism activities – skiing, touring, mountaineering, fishing and hiking.

Adjacent Patterns of Land Use

- Adjacent cut blocks along both sides of the lower section of the park.
- Tourism activities based on helicopter access to the north of the park and extending into the park.

First Nations Interests

- There are no recorded archaeological sites in the park.
- First Nations use and interest in the area are unknown.

Other Agency Interests

The park will be managed in close co-ordination with various resource agencies, particularly:

- Fish and Wildlife Science and Allocation Section – grizzly bear and caribou management
- Ministry of Forests – forest harvesting and access management adjacent to the park; the park provides opportunity for forest ecological research projects.

Private and Public Stakeholder Interests

- Trapper and guide outfitter hold operating territories over the park.

Protected Area Role Statement

This relatively large park was set aside to protect the wilderness character and quality of the Upper Seymour drainage, with representation of extensive and varied habitats from valley bottom river and wetlands ecosystems, old growth forests and steep slide alder covered slopes to alpine tundra and mountain summits. Forest roads provide reasonable access to the lower section of the park to allow visitors to canoe the river and view some of the largest and oldest cedar trees in the interior of the province. The park provides extensive wild country for wilderness recreation and tourism.

Management Commitments and Issues

Management Direction from Previous Planning

This management direction statement, future management plans, and all resulting management actions will follow the intent and criteria set out by the Okanagan-Shuswap LRMP for protected areas. The LRMP did not identify any particular management issues or directions for the park.

Management Issues

The following management issues have been identified:

Theme	Issue
Securing park boundaries	• Park boundaries are not obvious. Logging roads and cut blocks create confusion and there are remnant roads and recent cutblocks in the park.
Protecting ecological values	• Inventory of flora and fauna is incomplete. • Interim management guidelines are required for fire and forest pest management.
Poor recreational access	• There is no established put-in and take-out canoe access to the river. • Difficult terrain and heavy underbrush restrict hiking and backcountry travel.

Management Direction

Priority Management Objectives and Strategies:

Objective	Strategy
To protect the park's natural and recreational values	• Sign park boundaries at strategic locations. • Place map of park and management direction statement on the BC Parks' website. • Establish long term monitoring of conditions and changes to park habitats with particular attention to the lower section of the park. • Restrict vehicle use to roads that were excluded from the park. All pre-existing roads within the park will be closed off and rehabilitated (natural rehabilitation may be an option). • Develop interim fire management plan for the area. The long-term intent may be to allow for natural fires in some portions of the park, but until there is sufficient knowledge of park resources and understanding of potential impacts, all fires will be strictly controlled. • Monitor forest development and other resource development activities on adjacent land; discuss potential mitigative measure with developers to minimize access to the park boundary. • Co-operate with Fish and Wildlife Science and Allocation Section in any studies, inventories and monitoring of wildlife use in the park, particularly relating to grizzly bear and caribou; and, the

Objective	Strategy
	Ministry of Forests research section in any studies or research projects. • All access and recreation developments in the park will undergo impact assessments, especially to minimize impacts to grizzly bear and caribou.
To provide for access and recreation use of Upper Seymour River Park.	• There is potential for development of river access for canoeing, but the remoteness of the park dictates that this project will be of low priority within the Thompson Region. • Existing roads to the park allow reasonable access for viewing of giant cedar trees. Information could be made available through the park web site to direct people to the best viewing sites. Future development of a short trail system and parking area could be considered to facilitate viewing of the trees. • There is long term potential to develop a trail following the river to Seymour pass at the top end of the drainage. The heavy underbrush and numerous slide paths would make such a trail difficult to establish and expensive to maintain. This trail project is considered of very low priority within the Thompson Region.
To recognize pre-existing tourism use of the park.	• Issue park use permits for existing tenured tourism activities.
Consider new tourism uses.	• Only activities which are compatible with the key values of the park will be acceptable. Impact assessments will be required for any major uses.

Consultation and Future Planning

Planning and management of the park will conform with the intent and directions as set forth in the province's Protected Areas Strategy. The Environmental Stewardship Division is accountable for planning, administration and management of the park through application of the laws, policies and regulations granted under the *Park Act*. The Environmental Stewardship Division will coordinate with other agencies, the LRMP table, various public planning groups and First Nations in developing management plans for all of the new parks arising from the Okanagan-Shuswap LRMP.

This management direction statement has been reviewed and approved in principle by the Okanagan-Shuswap LRMP implementation team.

This management direction statement is intended to provide direction and guidelines for managing Upper Seymour River Park for the foreseeable future.

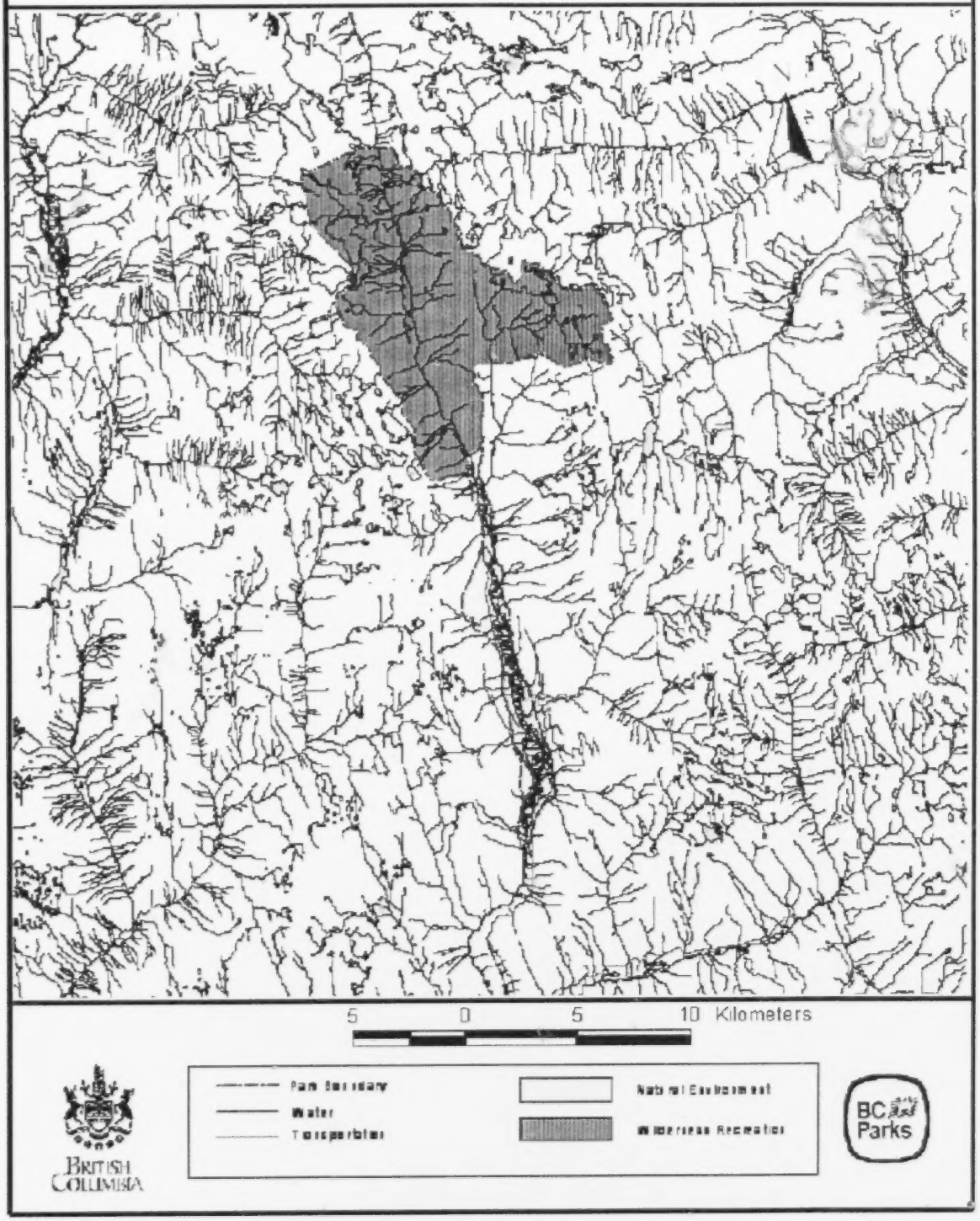
Zoning Plan

As defined under the guidelines and criteria of the provincial park zoning system, the park is separated into two zones:

- **Natural Environment** – Includes the lower roaded section of the park. Trails and parking for river access and viewing of the giant cedars can be developed in this zone.
- **Wilderness Recreation** – This includes the majority of the park, takes into account the existing tourism operations and allows for potential development of a trail to the top end of the valley.

Figure2: Park Zoning

Upper Seymour Park



Appendix I - Table of Acceptable Activities, Uses and Facilities for Upper Seymour River Park

The following table provides a summary of acceptable uses, activities and facilities in the park.

Activity/Use/Facility	Acceptability
Aboriginal traditional uses and activities	Y
Hunting	Y
Fishing	Y
Trapping	N2
Grazing (domestic livestock)	N/A
Recreational Gold Panning/Rock Hounding	N
Utility corridors	N
Communication Sites	N2
Horse Use/ Pack Animals	Y[3]
Guide Outfitting (hunting)	Y
Guide Outfitting (fishing)	M
Guide Outfitting (nature tours)	M
Guide Outfitting (river canoeing, rafting)	M
Cat-Assisted Skiing	M
Ski Hills	N/A
Commercial Recreation (facility-based)	N
Commercial recreation (non-facility based)	Y[2]
Backcountry Huts	N
Water Control Structures	N
Fish Stocking and Enhancement	N1
Road Access	Y[1]
Off-road Access (snowmobiling)	N
Off-road Access (motorized)	N
Off-road Access (mechanical activities)	Y[3]
Motorized Water Access	N
Aircraft Access (helicopter)	Y
Fire Management (suppression)	Y
Fire Management (prescribed fire management)	N
Fire Management (prevention)	Y
Forest Insect/Disease Control	M
Noxious Weed Control	Y
Exotic Insect/Disease Control	M
Scientific Research (specimen collection)	M
Scientific Research (manipulative activities)	N

Y= allowed, subject to conditions identified in the interim management statement or management plan
N= not allowed
M= may be permitted if compatible with protected area objectives.
N1= allowed for expressed management purposes only
N2= not normally allowed, but if present at time of PA establishment, will normally be allowed to continue

[1] Road access plan for this area designates open and closed roads
[2] By permit only
[3] On designated trails only